



PENINSULA FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.

Mornington Peninsula, Victoria, Australia

NEWSLETTER: JUNE 2021

Adams Creek NCR 13th March



I had heard of the Adams Creek Nature Conservation Reserve by word of mouth as a place that might be of interest to the Club. Situated to the east of Western Port Bay at Lang Lang, it is a block of remnant bushland not far from one of our semi-regular destinations at The Gurdies. It is hemmed in by sand mines and adjacent to Bassgas. Adams Creek itself flows through the northern edge of the Reserve on its way to Western Port, whilst the old railway line, now disused, lies just to the south of the Creek.

Access is obtained via Hookers Road off the South Gippsland Highway; Hookers Road continues through the

Reserve but vehicle access is barred by a gate. Pedestrian access is gained around the road gate. At the entrance is a sign stating that the Reserve is part of a project developed as an offset from the Peninsula Link Freeway for conservation of the Southern Brown Bandicoot. In 2011 a remote camera set by DELWP captured images of a bandicoot in the Reserve, which was then the Lang Lang NCR (signs with this title can still be seen). Other locations included in the bandicoot project include Wonthaggi Heathlands NCR and Kilcunda-Harmers Haven Coastal Reserve.

Signs for the 'Lang Lang NCR' mark the block to the west of Hookers Rd, i.e. to the left on the map, and south of Adams Creek. This block is bounded to the west by the Bassgas plant. Possibly the Adams Creek NCR includes the old Lang Lang NCR plus the area to the east, with some additional, disconnected, blocks to the north of the Creek, and the creek line itself.

We only explored the part that was (I'm guessing) formerly the Lang Lang NCR (the sign was not at "You are Here" but on the corner further south). The substrate is pure sand, hence the surrounding sand mines; there has been a suggestion that the Reserve will be mined for sand in the future—how this would fit in with the Bandicoot programme is a mystery.

I would describe the vegetation as Heathy Woodland, with an overstorey mainly of Messmate (particularly in the lower sections) and Narrow-leaved Peppermint, plus some Coast Manna Gum. A few Blackwoods were seen in the lower, dune swale areas. Understorey was mainly shrubs and bracken, with some sedges. Ferns were found along the creekline. Plants noted are shown in the table — by no means an exhaustive list.

Lang Lang NCR is also one of nine locations named as a habitat for the vulnerable Green-striped Greenhood *Pterostylis chlorogramma*, (*National Recovery Plan for*



Fifteen Threatened Orchids in South-eastern Australia by Mike Duncan, Andrew Pritchard and Fiona Coates, DSE 2010) The only sign of orchids we saw was a very old Hyacinth stem.



Banksia spinulosa

Of particular interest were some species not familiar in our usual haunts on the Peninsula: Hairpin Banksia and Wiry Bauera, which are mostly found east of Western Port and in the hills to the north, and Prickly Geebung, which is a bit more common around the coast. All of these were in flower at the time.



Prickly Geebung & Wiry Bauera

It was not a good day for birdwatching, being fairly cool and overcast, but we did observe 20 species, including Crimson and Eastern Rosella, White-throated Treecreeper, and seven different honeyeaters — the usual bush birds.

As you can see from the sign, the Reserve is open to dogs and horses — there were plenty of the latter on our visit.

Definitely worth a return visit; spring would be a good time.—**Lee Denis**



All photos by Lee Denis

Plant List: Adams Creek NCR 13/3/2021

Eucalyptus radiata	Narrow-leaved Peppermint
E. viminalis ssp pryoriana	Coast Manna Gum
E. obliqua	Messmate
Acacia melanoxylon	Blackwood
Banksia marginata	Silver Banksia
B. spinulosa	Hairpin Banksia
Olearia lirata	Snowy Daisy-bush
Pomaderris aspera	Hazel Pomaderris
Cassinia aculeata	Dogwood
Kunzea leptospermoides	Burgan
Monotoca scoparia	Prickly Broom-heath
Bossiaea cinerea	Showy Bossia
Leucopogon australis	Spike Beard-heath
Daviesia latifolia	Hop Bitter-pea
Persoonia juniperina	Prickly Geebung
Leptospermum continentale	Prickly Tea-tree*
Melaleuca squarrosa	Scented Paperbark
Bauera rubioides	Wiry Baura
Platylobium obtusangulum	Common Flat-pea
Senecio glomeratus	Annual Fireweed
Amyema pendula	Drooping Mistletoe
Muelleriana eucalyptoides	Creeping Mistletoe
Cassytha melantha	Coarse Dodder-laurel
Selaginella uliginosa	Swamp Selaginella
Gahnia sieberiana	Red-fruited Saw-sedge
Patersonia fragilis	Short Purple-flag
Empodisma minus	Spreading Rope-rush
Adiantum aethiopicum	Common Maidenhair
Blechnum nudum	Gristle Fern
Pteridium esculentum	Austral Bracken

The Day of the Darters: Birding at Braeside Park 1st March



On a lovely day for birdwatching, fine with sunny periods and light wind, nine members attended this popular birding spot. Our first sighting was a pair of Straw-necked Ibis stalking through the picnic area, obviously well used to people.



On the wetlands side water birds were well represented, with almost the full complement of likely ducks—the exceptions being Musk Duck and Hardhead. Swan, two Grebes, two Cormorants, Pelican, White-faced Heron, Royal Spoonbill, and Great Egret were all

noted, but by far the most impressive were the numbers of Darters, perhaps twenty or thirty all told; twelve were counted on one tree in the wetland. They included quite a few juveniles.

Bush birds made up almost half of the final total of 47. Two

species that we didn't see were Red-rumped Parrot and Red-browed Finch, which are usually present there. The only raptor identified was Swamp Harrier; a brief fly-by of an unidentified bird of prey lead to some debate, but no conclusion.

The Ranger told us that the water level was lower than usual, and it was certainly very dry on the eastern, heathland, side of the park. Very few birds were seen on that side, apart from some Moorhens on one of the few ponds.



Non-bird observations included the inevitable rabbits, (although it seemed to us fewer than usual), an echidna, a fox, and a cat. Also abundant were Jewel Spiders, which I am informed by Rog are of the species *Austracantha minex*.
—Lee Denis

Bird List For Braeside Park 1st March 2021

Blue-billed Duck	Chestnut Teal	White-faced Heron	Eurasian Coot	Laughing Kookaburra	Grey Butcherbird
Freckled Duck	Pink-eared Duck	Great Egret	Masked Lapwing	Superb Fairy-wren	Australian Magpie
Black Swan	Australasian Grebe	Australian White Ibis	Silver Gull	White-browed Scrubwren	Little Raven
Australian Shelduck	Hoary-headed Grebe	Straw-necked Ibis	Rock Dove	Brown Thornbill	Welcome Swallow
Australian Wood Duck	Darter	Royal Spoonbill	Little Corella	Red Wattlebird	Common Blackbird
Pacific Black Duck	Little Pied Cormorant	Swamp Harrier	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Noisy Miner	Common Starling
Australasian Shoveler	Little Black Cormorant	Purple Swamphen	Rainbow Lorikeet	Magpie-Lark	Common Myna
Grey Teal	Australian Pelican	Dusky Moorhen	Eastern Rosella	Grey Fantail	

Birding at Pt Nepean 29th March

The birding group of Lee, Leanne, Heather, Velimir, William and myself went to Point Nepean National Park. It was a perfect autumn day to visit this beautiful part of the Mornington Peninsula. After arrival around 10 a.m. we, apart from William, set off for the Police Point Bush reserve going through Moonah Woodland where plants included Seaberry Saltbush, Thyme Rice Flower, Coast Swainson-pea and Bower Spinach. Unfortunately we also saw lots of Polygala alongside many of the pathways.

We passed many informative placards about the history of the Quarantine Station with almost 50 heritage listed



Photo by Heather Ducat

buildings and artefacts spanning over 150 years. The Quarantine Station was established in 1852. It became a public park in 2004.

We walked down the stairs to the beach and enjoyed the magnificent Dune Limestone Cliffs. Back to land and a visit to the Information Centre and a wander around the grounds looking at the Medical Superintendent Quarters and the Shepherd's Hut and other beautiful buildings.



Photo by Velimir Dragic

We returned to our cars and met up with William and drove to Gunners Cottage where we had lunch. We set off along Defence Road and right into

Walter Pisterman Walk and visited the Point Nepean Cemetery. In 1887 the steamship SS Cheviot was wrecked on the ocean coast at the area now known as Cheviot Beach. Thirty-five people died and eight recovered bodies are buried at the cemetery. Some of the earliest graves belong to victims of typhus fever from the clipper ship Ticonderoga which arrived from England in 1852. A headstone records the deaths of four McRae children and their mother.

We continued our walk along Defence Road to Point Nepean enjoying beautiful views of the Bay and Bass Strait. By the time we reached the end of the road we were rather weary. Apart from Lee, the rest of us opted to wait for the 4.30 pm shuttle bus back to the Gunners Cottage carpark.

A highlight of the day for Heather and myself was the

sighting of a Pipit. Luckily for me it was in the open on the ground and stayed still long enough for me to find it in my binoculars, a real bonus for me.

At this stage of the report, I point out that I am the most inexperienced member of the Peninsula Field Naturalists. I have been a member on and off for many years. I just turn up at the appointed time and day, enjoy the companionship and learn a little knowledge along the way. I then return home and forget half of it. This time I remembered to bring a notepad and pencil. A big mistake. When Lee asked who was going to write up the bird list, Heather kindly nominated me. As I always feel a little guilty at my lack of input into this group, I had to agree. In the words of Miss Helena from Romper Room, "I say thank-you" to all those members who write the articles and produce the newsletter, organise the speakers and outings, share their expert knowledge and work so hard for this group. I always enjoy the trips, meetings and camps and hope to for many more years.

Another highlight for Heather was the sighting of a Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater. Birds spotted during the day were :

Bird List For Point Nepean 29th March 2021

Australasian Gannet	Spotted Turtle-Dove	Grey Shrike-thrush
Little Pied Cormorant	Galah	Grey Fantail
Pied Cormorant	Crimson Rosella	Grey Butcherbird
Great Cormorant	Eastern Rosella	Australian Magpie
Australian White Ibis	Brown Thornbill	Little Raven
Straw-necked Ibis	Red Wattlebird	Welcome Swallow
Sooty Oystercatcher	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Silvereye
Pacific Gull	Noisy Miner	Common Blackbird
Silver Gull	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Common Starling
Crested Tern	Singing Honeyeater	Common Myna

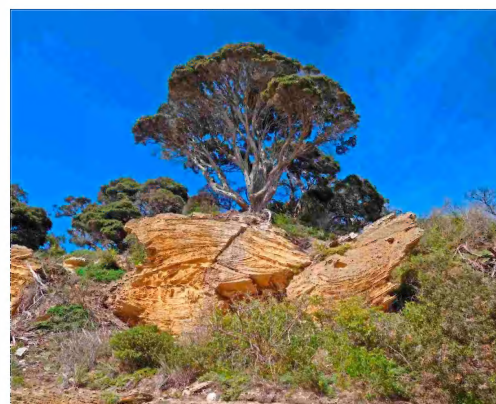


Photo by Heather Ducat

It was an absolutely stunning day and we walked over 8 km.—**Eleanor Masterson**

April Meeting – Open Night 14th April

Di Johns

Di Johns showed us photos from her trip through Mongolia. This was part of a tour which started in St Petersburg, Russia and travelled through Mongolia to China, 18 months ago. Di's timing was good- it's hard to imagine when a trip like that will happen again.

Confusingly there is Inner Mongolia and Outer Mongolia - Inner Mongolia is an autonomous region of the Peoples Republic of China, and Mongolia (Outer) is an independent country, which is where Di travelled. The religion is Buddhism. Much of the country is grassy steppes, with Bactrian (two humped) camels, yaks, and nomadic herdsman, though this traditional way of life is vanishing fast, with younger Mongolians preferring city life. The tour

group stayed in traditional ger (yurts). They visited a National Park south east of Ulan Bator, which was mountainous with pine forests. One of the many surprising sights was a massive statue of Chinggis Khaan (Genghis Khan). Another one was a protest against Rio Tinto.

Roger Standen

Roger has been conducting an invertebrate study at Woods Reserve, going there once a month at night, trapping moths and insects using a sheet and a light. He showed us some of the more spectacular moths and beetles, using macro photography to show us their amazing details. There is going to be another episode, which we look forward to.

—Judy Smart

SEANA Camp Hamilton 16th-18th April

This camp was originally going to be held in April 2020 – but we know what happened then.

The Hamilton FNC heroically held on, and re-scheduled for April 2021, with fingers crossed. They must have had many anxious moments, and had to do an enormous amount of Covid-safe organisation. For instance, the Friday evening meeting had to be spread over several rooms so that we could socially distance. But it all worked out, and even the weather was kind. There were lots of registrations, and few cancellations, so there were 140 of us, quite a lot to wrangle.

Friday night we had speakers on the Eastern Barred Bandicoot—Status and Recovery. A few EBB were discovered surviving in the Hamilton tip some years ago, and efforts to maintain the population have been a roller coaster of success and failure ever since. Now there is a population living in an enclosure at the Community Parklands next door to our venue. After the talk we went out spotlighting for them, and some of us were lucky enough to see them.

The excursions for the weekend featured Budj Bim World Heritage site, volcanic sites (see separate article), the

Southern Grampians, Wannon River, Lake Linlithgow, and local swamps, where a flock of brolgas was seen. Another highlight was Mark Bachmann of the Nature Glenelg Trust, speaking about their successful restoration of wetlands.



Forested slopes of Mt Napier - All photos by Heather Ducat

Nature Glenelg Trust was established by a group of professional ecologists a decade ago, and specialises in wetland restoration. They own a number of reserves in southwest Victoria and southeast South Australia. (<https://natureglenelg.org.au>).

—Judy Smart

VOLCANIC HISTORY

'The 'New Volcanic Province' extends from Mt. Gambier in south-east South Australia, across western Victoria to the northern & western suburbs of Melbourne & to the Central Highlands around Ballarat & Creswick. The region has been active from about 7 million years ago to

about 4,500 years ago & is considered as dormant. Volcanic activity was caused by thinning & stretching of the Earth's crust, making it easier for magma to break through the surface, as Australia separated from Antarctica during the final breakup of Gondwana.

The region has over 700 eruptive points that spewed ash, scoria & very runny lava across the landscape which has

created the 3rd. largest lava plain in the world. The plain has been built up from many thin lava flows, the average thickness of the lava is about 60m. There are six sites of international significance & 14 sites of national significance; this area is Australia's most extensive volcanic region.

The oldest activity formed the steep-sided lava domes of Hanging Rock & the Camels Hump which erupted thick, sticky trachyte lava that cooled in the volcanic vents. The youngest volcanoes are in South Australia where activity formed the impressive Mt. Gambier maar complex & the pyroclastic cone of Mt. Schank.

TYPES OF VOLCANOES

Lava Shield Volcanoes -- Numerous flows of very runny lava streamed away from the vents, the flows now form broad low hills with very gently sloping sides: eg. Mt. Cottrell near Melton, Mt. Napier.

Scoria Volcanoes - These erupted showers or fountains of red-hot bits of frothed-up lava, sprayed from the vent by escaping gas. They may cool & harden during flight or remain molten.



Rim of scoria cone - Mt. Napier

Scoria pieces were solid when they landed & can be pea-sized or as big as a walnut. The fragments accumulated around the vent, building up a cone

surrounding a crater. The scoria can show layering with different size fragments, perhaps indicating separate eruptions. Chunks of solid lava, called volcanic bombs, are often found in scoria. Scoria cones usually have steep slopes & smooth outlines, they are the most prominent of Victorian volcanoes: eg. Mt. Elephant near Derrinallum & Mt. Buninyong near Ballarat. Eruptions from most Victorian scoria volcanoes lasted perhaps for a few months to a few years. Towards the end of the activity, a lava lake often formed in the crater: EG. Mt. Porndon near Camperdown, is now topped by a lava disc that was a lava lake. In some cases the lava was able to break through the crater wall & flow down the sides of the cone. These 'breached scoria cones' are very common in Victoria, eg. Mt. Franklin near Daylesford & Mt. Noorat near Terang.

Maar Volcanoes - They result from explosions when hot magma rises through rocks near the surface that contain a large amount of ground water. High pressure steam is produced, which blasts the magma & surrounding rocks into small fragments. These fall from the air to form layers of ash or tuff around a wide shallow crater. When activity stops, a ring of tuff forms a low ridge around the edge of the crater. The floor is usually below the level of the surrounding land, so lakes & swamps often form in maar

craters. If there is enough magma to dry out the sub-surface rocks, steam is reduced & new eruptions build scoria cones within the crater; these are called 'nested maars.' Small lava flows may also be erupted. Maar volcanoes are rare in the world but about 40 maars with surrounding tuff rings are known on the Western District volcanic plain. Most are in the southern part of the plain, between Colac & Warrnambool where eruptions occurred through water-rich young limestone. There are few maars in the highlands, where the underlying old sedimentary rocks do not contain as much ground water. Some of the best examples of maars are Tower Hill near Warrnambool & Mt. Gambier. Tower Hill is 3.2 km. wide & one of the largest maars in the world; it erupted about 25,000 years ago. At Mt. Gambier the pale limestone, through which the magma erupted, is visible above the waterline of the famous Blue Lake.



Pale Limestone - Blue Lake, Mt. Gambier

OTHER VOLCANIC FEATURES

Tumuli or Lava Blisters

Circular mounds or blisters of rock up to 10m high & 20m. in diameter

which form on the surface of a lava-flow. They can form as molten lava flows over a swamp & steam is generated. Where pressure on the underside of the stationary but



Tumulus (lava blister) - Harman Valley

molten & crusted lava is sufficient, some weak points of the crust are forced to break & rise in a dome. They can also form from a buildup of gas within the lava. Tumuli form fairly quickly, taking from 12 hrs. to a few days. There are excellent examples in the Harman Valley to the south of Hamilton. Lava-flows from Mt. Napier covered the landscape, creating lava tubes, stony rises & tumuli; the flow extended south for 24km. The last lava-flow was only about 7 - 8,000 years ago, the youngest volcanic activity in Victoria. These tumuli are the best in Australia.

Lava Tubes



Lava tube with a section of collapsed roof

As a lava-flow cools, a hard crust forms on the surface & helps to insulate the still-molten lava inside which continues to flow, sometimes over long distances. When the supply of lava stops, it drains away, leaving a hollow—a lava tube or lava cave. The lava cave usually has a domed roof & flat floor. When parts of the roof collapse after the lava has solidified, entrances or skylights to the tubes are created. Lava tubes are common in Victoria, with good examples in the Harman Valley at Byaduk. The tubes can be 20m. high or wide & may be up to 1 km. Long. The longest tubes in Australia are the Undara Tubes in Queensland, some up to 100 km. long.

Reference: 'Volcanoes in Victoria.' 'Australian Volcanoes.' Volcanoes Discovery Centre - Penshurst.

At the conclusion of the Saturday excursion to Mt. Napier & Byaduk Lava Tubes, Velimir & I were keen to see a collection of Lava Blisters or Tumuli, located about 5km. from Byaduk Lava Tubes. After informing our leader of our plan, we & 4 others set off to find these rare & amazing formations. Situated on a tongue of lava from Mt. Napier/Harman Valley lava-flow, there is a cluster of about 30 blisters on the gently undulating terrain. They are on private land but with easy public access. Some are 8 - 10m. high, the domed surface has a pattern similar to dried mud cracks. Certainly worth the detour. See notes above for details on their formation.



Birding near Yatmerone Wetland & Mt. Rouse in distance

MOUNT ROUSE, VOLCANOES DISCOVERY CENTRE & YATMERONE WETLAND

Our choice for Sunday's full day excursion was more geology; Velimir & I are often on the same wave-length. First stop was Mount Rouse, about 35 km. south-east of Hamilton. It rises 120m above the surrounding landscape & is a composite volcano consisting of a massive scoria cone, a tuff ring & a crater containing a small lake. Very fluid lava-flows followed shallow, gently sloping river courses & extended for at least 60km to the south, reaching the coast at Port Fairy. Access to the summit was much easier than Mt. Napier, the road spirals up to within 200m of the top. The panoramic view includes the dimpled lava-flow, the dark forested slopes of Mt. Napier to the west & the spectacular peaks of the tail-end of the Grampians, to the north. A large scoria quarry on the lower flank of the cone displayed layers of red & black scoria with bombs up to 35 cm. diameter & topped by a layer of lava. A thin layer of basalt in the scoria has been dated at about 1.8 million years.

Our visit to the Volcanoes Discovery Centre at Penshurst was very informative with a lecture by a staff member & an audio visual presentation explaining the volcanic history of the 'New Volcanic Province.'



Volcanoes Discovery Centre - Penshurst

We also visited Yatmerone Wildlife Reserve, a deep freshwater marsh, near Penshurst. It is one of many swamps & lakes that formed on the dimpled lava-flows when earlier drainage patterns were disrupted. Yatmerone wetland is spring-fed & rarely dries out, providing a haven for wildlife. A Friends Group has been active since 2010, using locally sourced plants to improve the woodland around the perimeter & building a bird hide. Over 55 species of birds have been recorded, we had an excellent view of 3 White-necked Herons; also sighted by some of our group was a big, fat Tiger Snake.—

Heather Ducat

Birding at Seaford Wetland 3rd May

A cloudy day and temperature between 15 and 18°C were ideal conditions for this year's May Seaford birding. Even though the Bureau predicted 95% chance of rain, we finished our outing before the rain arrived at around 3 pm.

We began from the viewing platform and the start didn't promise much. We saw nothing apart from Purple Swamphen, Starling and a Magpie. When we turned left from Austin Rd into Peninsula line track, we observed two Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and found ourselves in the "wattlebirds territory". Little and Red Wattlebirds were crying and flying individually and in flocks, whilst "arguing" with Noisy Miners. In the bush, to the right of the track, we came upon a flock of about twenty Red-browed Finches. They were flying up and down vivaciously, and kept moving away from us, as we approached. Honeyeaters and some parrots made an appearance, but we were hoping to see Flame Robin even though it probably wasn't cold enough for them to descend from the mountains. And we saw one, a female, which kept alternating between pecking at grass and returning to the wire on the fence. Lee took several photos and I hope at least one of them is usable. At the bridge on Old Wells Rd we turned left along Kananook



Photos by Lee Denis



Creek trail, where we saw some ducks, rails, cormorants, and Grey Currawongs. Even though we had a rich birding day, we didn't get to see many big waterbirds (apart from ibises) and only towards the very end one raptor - Swamp Harrier.

We turned left, leaving moving away from Kananook Creek, and continued along the opposite side of the Wetlands. We went past the College and the Primary School and arrived at a high ground next to the Wetlands. This is a great spot with a bench to rest on and an excellent view of the surroundings. We saw lots of ducks, as well as Black Swan, Australasian Grebe and a Black-fronted Dotterel, which looked so tiny jumping in and out of view on the shore opposite us, that it was barely visible. We were all trying to focus our binoculars and explain to each other where to look in order to see it.

We finished back up on Austin Rd, where we conversed, had lunch and made a bird list. The rain finally arrived, but it didn't manage to spoil a pleasant and successful day.—
Velimir Dragic



Seaford Wetland morning fog – Photo by Velimir Dragic

May Meeting – Open Night 12th May

Ruth Marriott

When the Peninsula Field Naturalists Club was first formed in 1952, the intention was for it to be a club for young people and children. Ruth's family arrived in Seaford in 1952, and her father taught at Carrum Primary School. With other teachers, he was an enthusiastic proponent of the Club.

Dr Phillip Law, the Antarctic expeditioner, was to speak in Frankston during the visit of the Thala Dan, and the Frankston Field Naturalists Club as it was then hosted his talk. It quickly became an all ages Club, but the young people were encouraged to bring along objects to show and discuss at meetings. Ruth brought along some of her collection to show us in tribute to the meetings of her youth. One was an Aboriginal grinding stone, found in the Mallee and also some Aboriginal cutting tools. Other favourite rocks were gibber rocks from Bedourie Qld, near the NT border, buckshot gravel and quartz.

Velimir Dragic: Adventures from my Previous Life in a Country Which No Longer Exists

This has to be the best title for a talk ever. Velimir, our member, spoke about his adventures as a youth in the country formerly known as Yugoslavia. As Velimir says, it

was called Yugoslavia when he left, so he's not renaming it. His talk was illustrated with black and white original photos, with gaps filled with photos from Wikipedia.

He grew up on the Montenegro coast, at Ulcinj, where his parents were both science teachers. He loved the Scouts, going on camps and mountain climbing, which is where he started his rock collecting and enthusiasm for geology. One camp was at Prespa Lakes- tectonic lakes. With friends he rafted down the Timok River, which is actually 5 rivers. The name is an ancient one- in Latin it was Timaus, in Ancient Greek, Timachos.

He took up caving, using carbide lamps. Another trip was hitchhiking along the Adriatic coast, then walking 95k from Pula to Portoroz, with a detour around Tito's home, where it was forbidden to walk.

During Velimir's time in the Army he learned to hunt , and one trip was hunting wild boar at Suva Planina (Dry Mountain), and another was to Tito's hunting ground in Belje-Kopachi Rit Reserve, where a friend was ranger.

The last photo was of Velimir with his girlfriend, now his wife, and the end of his solo adventures. —**Judy Smart**

Mortimer Picnic Ground 15th May

After not getting out much last year, five members decided to ignore the weather forecast and head to Bunyip State Park. Unfortunately much of it is still closed after the fires a couple of years ago, so one of the few possible destinations was the Mortimer picnic and camping ground. There was actual sunshine when we set out from Frankston; a brief hailstorm on the way was still not enough to deter us, and we arrived at Mortimer Picnic Ground under greyish skies, with an outside temperature of 5 degrees.



We crossed the camping area into the Nature Walk, whereupon it started to rain. This didn't deter us either—in fact we thought the combination of rain, sunshine and tree ferns was almost magical. The said tree ferns—Rough Tree Fern *Cyathea australis* for the most part, but also some Soft Tree Fern *Dicksonia antarctica*—mostly reach three or four metres in the first part of the walk, which follows the valley of William Wallace Creek, giving a closed-in feeling, with towering Mountain Ash and Mountain Grey Gum on the

slopes above.

It must be admitted, though, that the conditions were not very conducive to looking up, so anything above eye level tended to be missed. We did see some interesting fungi on this part of the walk.

The walk then crosses Tonimbuk Road into a fairly open woodland dominated by Messmate (*Eucalyptus obliqua*), first rising and then descending to Diamond Creek. On the higher part we did start to see some birds; watching some Eastern Yellow Robins we suddenly had a clear view of a Rose Robin amongst them. We could hear and see White-throated Treecreepers, whilst Brown Thornbills and Eastern Spinebills were active also.



Some of the plants noted included Wiry Bauera (*Bauera rubioides*), Narrow-leaf Wattle (*Acacia mucronata*), and thickets of Pouched Coral Fern (*Gleichenia dicarpa*). Some more fungi, and large patches of an Usnia-like lichen on the trunks of some of the trees also took our eye.

One plant that had us completely mystified had broad arrow-shaped leaves and purple berries. We could not even make a guess at what it might be. Later research showed it to be the only Victorian species of an entire plant family (which I had never heard of).

The plant is called Turquoise Berry, scientific name *Drymophila cyanocarpa*, belonging to the family Alstroemeriaceae, although sometimes included in the Liliaceae—therefore, a monocot. (I should point out that I'm following the nomenclature in the Victorian Herbarium website (<https://vicflora.rbg.vic.gov.au>). Not all sources agree)



Vicflora says the family includes five genera with about 170 species in Central and South America, with one genus endemic to Australia. According to Wikipedia, the family contains four genera: three of these, including around 250 species, are native to the Americas; a single species is endemic to New Zealand, and one genus, with two species, is endemic to eastern Australia. Just for variety, the NSW herbarium website says there are four genera with about 160 species (the other Australian species is *D. moorei*, which is not found in Victoria). Importantly for our

purposes, all agree on *Drymophila* being endemic to Australia.

Some of the American species are used as ornamentals, with two listed as garden escapes in Australia, such as Peruvian Lily *Alstroemeria aurea* (which is said to be endemic to Chile!).

The whole Nature Walk is listed in the Park Notes as taking 40 minutes; we took about 2 hours. Afterwards we walked some distance down Ferres Track, ENE from the picnic ground, which largely follows the north side of Diamond Creek. An open woodland up the slope had been burnt a few years ago; it was interesting to see signs of burning on the stringybarks, but not the gums, which stood out stark and white; we interpreted this as being because the gums shed their bark and emerge clean and new, while the stringybarks retain their charred bark. The effect was striking.—Lee Denis



All photos by Lee Denis

Peninsula Field Naturalists Club Inc

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month with a field trip the following Saturday. Further information and current Programme of Activities can be found at our website.

President:
Coralie Davies

All correspondence to
Secretary
Judy Smart
Newsletter edited by Lee Denis

Treasurer:
Linda Edwards

Annual Subs due July

Adult	\$30
Concession	\$25
Family	\$40

To pay direct to bank account: Bendigo Bank
BSB 633-108, account no. 123350068.
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www.peninsulafieldnaturalists.org.au